

Program Summary Department of Education Gifted Education

Program Overview

Administered by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), the state's Gifted Education program helps public schools provide enhanced learning opportunities for gifted pupils. The stated mission of the program is "to promote the development and implementation of extraordinary education through technical assistance and proper allocation, distribution, and monitoring of state grants so that gifted students reach higher levels of academic achievement, workplace skills and effective participation in society."

A "gifted pupil" is defined in Arizona law (A.R.S. § 15-779) as "a child who is of lawful school age, who due to superior intellect or advanced learning ability, or both, is not afforded an opportunity for otherwise attainable progress and development in regular classroom instruction and who needs special instruction, or special ancillary services, or both, to achieve at levels commensurate with his intellect and ability." A.R.S. § 15-779 requires school districts to identify as gifted those students who score at or above the 97th percentile on a nationally-normed standardized test. In addition, school districts and charter schools may identify any number of additional students as being gifted.

The total number of gifted students identified by each school district or charter school does not affect its Gifted Support funding (see "Program Funding" below). All students that it identifies as gifted, however, must receive instruction that meets requirements specified in A.R.S. § 15-779.02. Those requirements vary by individual district and grade level, but generally involve making gifted education qualitatively different than regular education. According to ADE guidelines, appropriate modifications must be made to the learning environment, the complexity and organization of content to be mastered, the emphasis on the learning and thinking process, and the quality and variety of the products students create to demonstrate mastery. ADE must approve each school district and charter school's master plan for gifted education to ensure the programs meet minimum state requirements (A.R.S. § 15-779.02).

If a school district fails to submit a plan for gifted education, or if the gifted education plan is not approved by ADE, the school district is not eligible to receive Group A funding for 3% of its entire student count as required by A.R.S. § 15-779.02 (See

"Group A Funding" below). ADE indicates that this provision has not disqualified any school district or charter school from receiving funding in recent years.

Program Funding

Gifted Education receives funding through the "Group A" weight in the K-12 Basic State Aid formula (A.R.S. § 15-943), and also from a separate Gifted Support program established in A.R.S. § 15-779.03.

Group A Funding

A.R.S. § 15-901 defines Group A as "educational programs for career exploration, a specific learning disability, an emotional disability, mild mental retardation, remedial education, a speech/language impairment, homebound, bilingual, preschool moderate delay, preschool speech/language delay, other health impairments and gifted pupils." Because Group A funding applies to more than the Gifted Education program, there is no specific funding amount that is required to be allocated to Gifted Education.

Gifted Support Funding

The Gifted Support program receives funding from the state General Fund, and from the non-appropriated Education Donations Fund established by A.R.S. § 35-142. In FY 2006, the program received approximately \$1.3 million from the General Fund, and \$42,200 the Education Donations Fund (See Table 1). This is an increase of 0.3% or \$4,100 above FY 2005. The additional monies were added for increases in Employee Related Expenditures for the 2 employees who administer the program.

Table 1 displays historical funding information for the Gifted Support Program by fund source, using data from FY 2001, FY 2005, and FY 2006. The total funding amount shown for each year includes approximately \$110,000 and 2 FTE Positions for program administration. All other monies are passed on to school districts and charter schools to help fund Gifted Education.

Table 1

Gifted Support Program Funding History			
<u>Fund</u>	<u>FY 2001</u>	<u>FY 2005</u>	<u>FY 2006</u>
General Fund	\$1,296,800	\$1,304,200	\$1,308,300
Education Donations Fund	0	42,200	42,200
Total	\$1,296,800	\$1,346,400	\$1,350,500

School district and charter school expenditures for Gifted Support vary based on local need. Common expenditures include teacher salaries, classroom supplies, fees for field trips and special events, and classroom equipment.

The funding formula for the program in A.R.S. § 15-779.03 allows each school district that meets program curricular and teacher qualification requirements to apply for funding equal to \$55 per pupil for 3% of the district's student count, or \$1,000, whichever is more. If program funding is insufficient to fully fund this formula, the State Board of Education is instructed to reduce allocations based on criteria such as "the utility and demonstrated effectiveness" of programs at individual sites.

In recent years, the department has reduced allocations below formula levels because funding has not increased to accommodate statewide enrollment growth. In doing so, ADE has reduced the \$55 per pupil funding amount by an equal amount for all districts and charter schools, while maintaining the minimum funding level of \$1,000 per district or charter school (*See Table 2*). The department estimates that approximately \$529,000 in increased funding would be needed in order to fully fund the program's allocation formula. *Table 2* show the funding level per student for FY 2004 and FY 2005:

Table 2	
Gifted Support Program Funding Per District/Pupil	
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Funding Per Student</u>
FY 2004	\$45.09
FY 2005	\$40.93

School districts and charter schools are not required to apply for Gifted Support funding. In FY 2005, 174 school districts (74%), and 28 charter schools (16%) applied for Gifted Support funding.

Recent Performance Measures

Table 3 shows performance measures that ADE currently uses to assess the effectiveness of the Gifted Support program. None of these measures appears in the General Appropriation Act.

One of the key performance measures in the table gauges the "Percent of grantees in compliance within gifted education." During FY 2004, 76% of grantees were in compliance with gifted education program requirements. A grantee is considered out of compliance if ADE has requested changes to its gifted education plan. The department is expecting to have 94% of grantees in compliance in FY 2006. According to the department, this is a result of an increased emphasis on assisting schools in developing gifted education programs, which is also displayed in the performance measures for the number of conferences, workshops and trainings held, the number of publications developed and made available on gifted education, and the number of school visits on gifted education. Each of these performance measures is expected to increase in FY 2006.

The measure for the "Total new funding received in the innovative and exemplary unit does not apply exclusively to Gifted Education. Other programs also receive this funding.

Some of the listed measures assess items that ADE does not have direct control over, such as the percentage of minority students enrolled in gifted education programs. Others generally evaluate process-related issues such as the number of conference, workshops and trainings held, rather than direct impacts of the program on students. ADE should consider developing a performance measure that provides feedback regarding students' perceptions of program value and effectiveness, since they are key stakeholders of the program.

Table 3			
Gifted Education Program Performance Measures			
<u>Performance Measure</u>	<u>FY 2004 Actual</u>	<u>FY 2006 Estimate</u>	
Total new funding received in the innovative and exemplary unit	\$55,795	\$101,925	
Number of model or promising programs showcased on department's website	2	8	
Number of conference, workshops and trainings held	10	15	
Percent of training participants surveyed reporting satisfaction with department training and support	90	98	
Number of school site visits on gifted education	22	35	
Number of publications developed and made available on gifted Education	5	12	
Percent of grantees in compliance within gifted education	76	94	
Percentage of gifted students enrolled in full-time gifted Programs	N/A	8	
Percentage of minority students enrolled in gifted programs in grades K-3	1	2	